COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) No, Sir. There is no such request pending at present.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

New Telephone Connections in the Rural and Hilly Areas of Meghalaya

477. SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTDU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are proposals to provide new telephone connections in the rural and hilly areas in the State of Meghalaya;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of villages so far provided with public telephone facilities in the state; and

(d) the time by which the telephone facilities are likely to be granted to the rest of the villages in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. About 2500 telephones are proposed to be provided by the end of 9th Five Year Plan.

(c) and (d) Telephone facilities have been provided in 1177 villages so far. Government plans are to provide Village Public Telephone facility in the remaining 4452 villages progressively by March, 2002 depending upon availability of adequate resources.

Electronic Telephone Exchanges in North-Eastern Region

478. SHRI PRAKANTA WARISA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to set up new electronic telephone exchanges in the NER;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the effective measures being taken or proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?